

**Overview:** The Office of Public Guardianship (OPG) provides guardians for people who:

- Are incapable of caring for themselves and protecting their own interests;
- Lack the funds to pay private guardians; and
- Have no family or friends who can serve as volunteer guardians.

## ***Public Guardianship Saves Money***

### **Washington State**

***In December 2011, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy will release a cost-savings study of the OPG. In the meantime, anecdotal stories demonstrate the cost-savings potential of OPG services.***

#### **Asset Recovery – Mrs. M**

Mrs. M, a widow with no children, lives in a nursing home. She has no income or assets.

##### ***After public guardian appointed***

- Research revealed that Mrs. M. owned a mobile home worth approximately \$13K.

##### ***Potential cost savings***

- Proceeds from sale of Mrs. M’s mobile home can be applied to nursing home care, saving the state medical assistance costs.

#### **Fewer ER Visits – Mr. G**

Mr. G, a homeless man in Pierce Co., was treated in an emergency room 58 times in 12 months.

##### ***After public guardian appointed***

- Preventative care arranged; zero ER visits in first six months of public guardianship.

##### ***Potential cost saving***

- Ending the revolving door of the ER saves approximately \$58,000 and increases availability of services for those truly in need.

#### **Virginia**

Over \$5 million saved in 2 years by:

- Discharging patients from psychiatric hospitals to less restrictive settings;
- Arranging pre-paid funerals;
- Securing community-based services, and
- Recovering assets.

*Source: Public Guardian and Conservator Programs: Evaluation of Program Status and Outcomes, 2003, pp.11-16*

#### **Florida**

Public guardianship programs produced an estimated cost-savings of \$1,883,043.

***“The programs pay for themselves in a single year.”***

*Source: Public Guardian Programs: Evaluation of Program Status and Outcomes, 2009, p.4.*

#### **New York**

The Guardianship Project estimated savings of \$225,000 when in-home care was arranged for a 79-year-old woman, allowing her to remain at home. She had been sent to a nursing home against her will following an emergency-room visit.

*Source: New York Times, Feb. 5, 2009.*

# ***The Office of Public Guardianship Saves Lives***

| <b><u>Mr. F</u></b>                                                                                                                                                 | <b><u>Mrs. I</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                      | <b><u>Ms. S</u></b>                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 80-year-old man with developmental delay and dementia                                                                                                               | 71-year-old woman with dementia, diabetes, and other health problems                                                                                                                      | Young adult woman with autism, anxiety disorder, and seizures                                                                                                  |
| <b><i>On his own</i></b>                                                                                                                                            | <b><i>On her own</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                  | <b><i>On her own</i></b>                                                                                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical and financial abuse by squatters in his apartment</li> <li>Roaming the streets at night to avoid abusers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living alone with no food and insufficient personal care</li> <li>Open wounds on both legs</li> <li>Financial exploitation by adult son</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living without electricity or winter clothes</li> <li>Was raped by a family friend but no charges were filed</li> </ul> |
| <b><i>After public guardian appointed</i></b>                                                                                                                       | <b><i>After public guardian appointed</i></b>                                                                                                                                             | <b><i>After public guardian appointed</i></b>                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe and clean housing</li> <li>Socialization and activities</li> <li>Regular medical attention</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meals</li> <li>Weekly wound care</li> <li>Money management</li> </ul>                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe, women-only housing</li> <li>Outings to local activity center</li> <li>Rape case is being prosecuted</li> </ul>    |

**Need for public guardians:** Due to cognitive disabilities, people who need guardians may not be able to prepare meals, understand bills, make appointments, or handle other important tasks.

**Role of public guardians:** When an incapacitated person has no other options, a judge can appoint a guardian who contracts with the OPG. Guardians might be required to make health care decisions, enhance safety, obtain housing, monitor bank accounts, pay bills, or handle other vital matters.

**Without public guardians:** When public guardians are not available, society's most vulnerable individuals can be exploited and abused. Some cycle between the streets and jails or institutions. Some lose housing or go without medical care. Others even fail to eat or bathe.

**Widespread Support:** The following organizations have supported funding request for the Office of Public Guardianship:

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|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ❖ AARP Washington                                       | ❖ Resident Councils of Washington                   |
| ❖ Advisory Council, Aging & Disability Services         | ❖ Solid Ground                                      |
| ❖ Disability Rights Washington                          | ❖ Washington Academy of Elder Law Attorneys         |
| ❖ ElderCare Alliance                                    | ❖ Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program |
| ❖ Elder Law Section of Washington State Bar Association | ❖ Washington State Senior Citizen's Lobby           |